

# Positive and negative sequence currents optimization to improve voltages during unbalanced faults

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**Abstract**—Grid faults constitute a series of unfortunate events that compromise power systems. With the increasing integration of renewables and their associated power electronics converters, the injected currents are controllable, but at the same time, they have to be limited so as not to damage the semiconductors. This poses the challenge to determine the combination of currents that improves the most the voltages at the point of common coupling. In this paper, such an issue is approached from an optimization perspective. Solving the optimization problem allows comparing its solutions with respect to the ones obtained by following the grid code control laws. Two fundamental scenarios are presented: one with a single converter, and another with two converters. Several parameters are varied for all kinds of faults to spot the changes on the currents, such as the severity of the fault, the distance of a hypothetical submarine cable, and the resistive/inductive ratio of the impedances. Overall the results indicate that injecting only reactive power is not always the preferable choice. While grid codes are not optimal, they can be regarded as near-optimal decision rules.

**Index Terms**—VSC, Grid-Support, Reference Optimization, Asymmetrical Fault, Current Saturation

## I. INTRODUCTION

THE rise in renewable energies has carried along with it the inclusion of Voltage Source Converters (VSC) as a means of coupling energetic resources to the grid while providing controllability [1]–[3]. Adopting such power electronics equipment has induced a progressive shrinkage on synchronous generators' influence in power systems. The high flexibility of VSC control enables advanced grid-support control, which could enhance the system performance during the fault and ensure a fast recovery after the fault clearance. However, compared to electrical machines, VSCs cannot withstand overloads [4]. Indeed, current (and also voltage) limitations cause VSC to behave differently. They reach what is called a saturated state. Many equilibrium points may arise as a result of that, especially in grids formed by multiple converters operating in critical conditions. The solution to such systems is also likely to become an arduous task to compute, as saturation states are defined by non-linear equations, or in more detail, by piecewise functions.

Not only do currents have to be constrained to not exceed the limitations, but they also have to collaborate on improving the voltages [5]. This becomes visible when looking at the requirements imposed by Transmission System Operators (TSO) in its grid codes [6], [7]. Although this was not the case years ago, when wind power represented a small percentage of the electricity mix, nowadays wind power plants have to control active and reactive power [8]. Besides, they have to

transiently support the faults. The latter aspect is often referred to as low voltage ride through (LVRT) [9], [10]. The traditional approach to raise the voltage at the point of common coupling is to inject reactive power proportionally to the severity of the fault [8], [11]. During the analysis of faults, it is often the case that voltages are decomposed into positive, negative, and zero sequence values. By doing so, the study of the fault is expected to be simplified, and in addition to that, some intuition can be build from inspecting the positive and negative sequence voltages. A concerning unbalanced fault is such that substantially decreases the positive sequence voltage with respect to the nominal voltage while the negative sequence voltage increases. Both sequences have to be thoroughly controlled, as discussed in [11], [12].

Nevertheless, for the most part, grid codes only specify reactive power injection during faults [13], [14]. This is because transmission networks are often considered to have an inductive characteristic. The influence of the grid impedance characteristics of the system optimized under an equilibrium state is covered in [12], where the authors express the currents to inject as a function of the voltage and the impedances. A recursive relation between the voltage and the current is found, which invalidates the possibility of working with a closed-form expression from where to compute the optimal currents solution. Expressions of the same nature are proposed in [15], where instead of attempting to solve the optimization problem, a control parameter is introduced. This takes various values, but no analysis is carried out to determine the optimal choice. The effect of varying this control parameter is studied in [16], although it is not computed with a systematic approach, but rather, manually. Reference [17] proposes a maximum allowed support (MAS) control scheme that is said to provide the maximum voltage support and simultaneously satisfying the current limitations. The study does not explicitly indicate how the current is distributed among the real and the imaginary positive and negative sequence components, and variations in input parameters are rather limited. Another voltage support scheme is presented in [18], where the injected currents depend neither on the active power nor the filter resistance. In addition, positive and negative sequence grid voltage values are imposed, which facilitates the obtention of the steady-state current values. A variation of the grid code requirements is depicted in [19]. The authors found it to provide better results than conventional grid codes. The majority of the grid support strategies described above are compared and summarized in [20]. It is worth mentioning that the systems under study considered in these references include a single VSC. Further conclusions are expected to be extracted from examining a two-converter case study.

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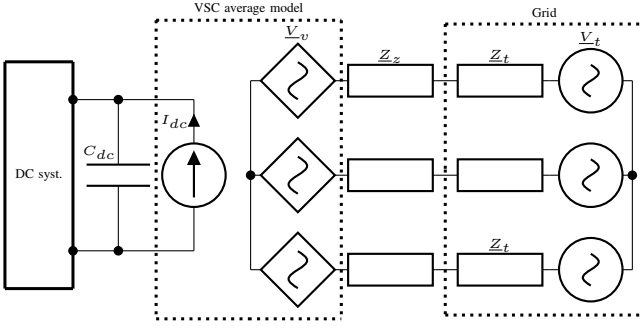


Fig. 1: Average model of a VSC connected to the grid

This paper proposes a methodology to identify the optimized system equilibrium point during the fault considering converters' current limitations. Two other control rules are implemented. One focuses on solving the optimization problem but in addition to the other constraints, it is restricted to only injecting reactive power. The third control rule follows the implementation of grid code specifications with its characteristic droop profile. These three options are tested for both balanced and unbalanced faults, where this last category includes the line to ground, the line to line, and the double line to ground faults. First, a basic system with a single converter is studied. Then, the analysis is repeated for a system with two converters in order to identify their interaction in saturated states.

Two main contributions come from this paper. On the one hand, it indicates the preferable injected currents under diverse conditions. A deeper understanding of the optimality of the solutions is expected to be gained from it. On the other hand, comparisons between the optimal solution and the one obtained by following the grid code are presented. An assessment about the convenience of grid codes to support faults can be derived, which should be useful when proposing future modifications in order to evolve towards more resilient grids.

## II. FORMULATION

### A. System modeling

VSCs are elements that interconnect DC systems with AC systems. As shown in Figure 1, they can be modeled following the so-called average model, where the switchings of the semiconductors are excluded. The VSC has been assumed to be connected to the AC grid with a filter in between denoted by  $\underline{Z}_z$ . The control strategy of the VSC consists of adjusting the voltages appropriately so that currents can indirectly meet the references [21].

Power systems are likely to involve more than a single converter. Therefore, the modeling is approached from a generalized perspective. Figure 2 presents the modeling for a system with  $n$  converters connected to a grid with  $n_g$  buses represented by its admittance matrix  $\underline{Y}_g$ . In addition, the grid has been modeled with a Norton equivalent instead of a Thevenin equivalent for simplification purposes. The VSCs are treated as current sources that inject currents of the form of  $\underline{I}_k \forall k \in [1, \dots, n]$ . Additional impedances denoted by  $\underline{Z}_{vk}$  connect the point of common coupling to the grid. Such point

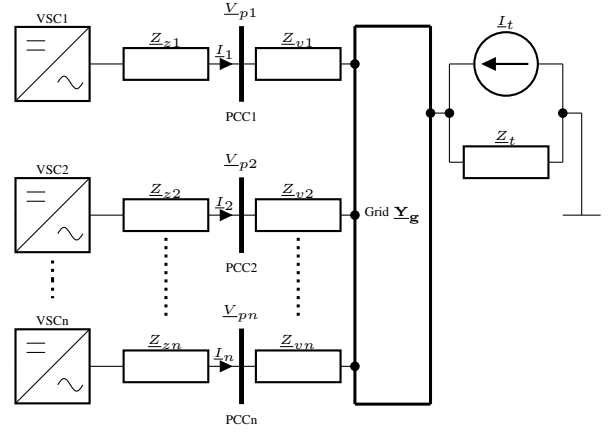


Fig. 2: Single-phase representation of a complete system

of common coupling is precisely where the voltages ought to be improved.

The relationship between currents and voltages can be established with an analysis in the natural reference frame or by employing symmetrical components as in [22]. Although both approaches are equally valid, working in the natural reference frame allows studying the system with greater flexibility, as only the particular elements of the admittance matrices that depend on the fault admittance experience changes. No other modifications in the topology have to be considered. Consequently, voltages and currents are related by

$$\begin{pmatrix} \underline{I}_1 \\ \underline{I}_2 \\ \vdots \\ \underline{I}_n \\ \underline{I}_t \end{pmatrix} = \begin{pmatrix} \underline{Y}_{v1} & 0 & \dots & 0 & -\underline{Y}'_{v1} \\ 0 & \underline{Y}_{v2} & \dots & 0 & -\underline{Y}'_{v2} \\ \vdots & \vdots & \ddots & \vdots & \vdots \\ 0 & 0 & \dots & \underline{Y}_{vn} & -\underline{Y}'_{vn} \\ -\underline{Y}'_{v1} & -\underline{Y}'_{v2} & \dots & -\underline{Y}'_{vn} & \underline{Y}_g \end{pmatrix} \begin{pmatrix} \underline{V}_{p1} \\ \underline{V}_{p2} \\ \vdots \\ \underline{V}_{pn} \\ \underline{V}_g \end{pmatrix}. \quad (1)$$

For a given converter  $k$ , its injected currents and its associated voltages at the point of common coupling are further developed as

$$\begin{cases} \underline{I}_k = [\underline{I}_k^{(a)}, \underline{I}_k^{(b)}, \underline{I}_k^{(c)}]^T \\ \underline{V}_{pk} = [\underline{V}_{pk}^{(a)}, \underline{V}_{pk}^{(b)}, \underline{V}_{pk}^{(c)}]^T \end{cases} \quad (2)$$

i.e., they contain the  $a$ ,  $b$  and  $c$  phase values. Voltages and currents are related via admittance matrices of the form  $\underline{Y}_{vk}$ , which in normal operating conditions follow

$$\underline{Y}_{vk} = \begin{pmatrix} \frac{1}{\underline{Z}_{vk}} & 0 & 0 \\ 0 & \frac{1}{\underline{Z}_{vk}} & 0 \\ 0 & 0 & \frac{1}{\underline{Z}_{vk}} \end{pmatrix}. \quad (3)$$

In case a fault occurs at the buses interconnected by  $\underline{Z}_{vk}$ , elements  $1/\underline{Z}_f$  are added by observation, where  $\underline{Z}_f$  denotes the fault impedance.

On the contrary, the admittance matrix  $\underline{Y}_g$  is a  $3n_g \times 3n_g$  matrix also built by observation. The object  $\underline{I}_t$  is a vector of dimensions  $3 \times n_g$  which accounts for the injected currents into the grid denoted by  $\underline{Y}_g$ . All its elements are null except for three entries that consider the injected currents from the Norton equivalent of the grid. Matrices of the form  $\underline{Y}'_{vk}$  are

$3 \times 3n_g$  objects constituted by elements  $1/Z_{vk}$ . In a realistic scenario, the grid  $\mathbf{Y}_g$  may be partially constituted by active and reactive power loads, i.e., PQ buses. They can be either ignored if the current they consume is assessed to be comparatively smaller than the fault current, or they can be modeled as constant admittances. No PQ loads have been considered in the case studies shown in this paper.

The final goal of the modeling is the obtention of voltages. They are computed from (1) by operating the product between the inverse of the full admittance matrix and the currents' vector. In order to have a clearer comprehension of the voltages, they are eventually converted into symmetrical components by means of Fortescue's transformation [23]:

$$\begin{pmatrix} \underline{V}_{pk}^0 \\ \underline{V}_{pk}^+ \\ \underline{V}_{pk}^- \end{pmatrix} = \frac{1}{3} \begin{pmatrix} 1 & 1 & 1 \\ 1 & a & a^2 \\ 1 & a^2 & a \end{pmatrix} \begin{pmatrix} \underline{V}_{pk}^a \\ \underline{V}_{pk}^b \\ \underline{V}_{pk}^c \end{pmatrix}, \quad (4)$$

where  $a = e^{j\frac{2\pi}{3}}$ .

### B. Optimization problem

Positive sequence voltages have to be maximized while negative sequence voltages have to be minimized. The zero sequence component of the voltages is a magnitude likely to become non-null under asymmetrical faults. Nevertheless, as VSC are unable to inject zero sequence currents, it will remain an uncontrolled variable in the sense that no efforts will be made towards reducing it. Current saturation restrictions imposed by the VSC characteristics have to be respected. This applies to each phase of each converter. Therefore, the generic optimization problem is

$$\begin{aligned} \min_{\underline{I}} \quad & \sum_{k=1}^n \left[ \lambda_k^+ |(1 - |\underline{V}_{pk}^+(I)|)| + \lambda_k^- |(0 - |\underline{V}_{pk}^-(I)|)| \right], \\ \text{s.t.} \quad & \max(\underline{I}_k^a, \underline{I}_k^b, \underline{I}_k^c) \leq I_{\max,k} \quad \forall k \in [1, \dots, n], \\ & \underline{I}_k^a + \underline{I}_k^b + \underline{I}_k^c = 0 \quad \forall k \in [1, \dots, n], \end{aligned} \quad (5)$$

where the positive and negative sequence components of voltages  $\underline{V}_{pk}$  are symbolically expressed as functions of the currents, and  $I_{\max,k}$  is the maximum allowed current by the  $k$  converter. It has been assumed that voltages at each phase of the converter do not surpass the limitations, which seems a fair assumption considering that voltages decreases substantially during faults. Ignoring voltage limitations tends to be a commonality in the literature as well.

The results gathered in this paper are computed with Python 3.9.1 and the aid of the Mystic package, a highly-constrained non-convex optimization framework [24], [25]. A differential global optimization solver has been employed with a relative precision up to  $1e-6$ .

### C. Grid code rules

In order to improve voltages during faults, grid code control rules typically impose injections of currents proportional to the

voltage drop [8], [26]. When defined as piecewise functions, for the positive sequence

$$\begin{cases} |\underline{I}_k^+| = 0 & |\underline{V}_{pk}^+| \geq 0.9 \\ |\underline{I}_k^+| = k_p(0.9 - |\underline{V}_{pk}^+|) & 0.5 \leq |\underline{V}_{pk}^+| < 0.9 \\ |\underline{I}_k^+| = 1 & |\underline{V}_{pk}^+| < 0.5 \end{cases} \quad (6)$$

whereas for the negative sequence

$$\begin{cases} |\underline{I}_k^-| = 0 & |\underline{V}_{pk}^-| \leq 0.1 \\ |\underline{I}_k^-| = k_n(|\underline{V}_{pk}^-| - 0.1) & 0.1 \leq |\underline{V}_{pk}^-| < 0.5 \\ |\underline{I}_k^-| = 1 & |\underline{V}_{pk}^-| > 0.5 \end{cases} \quad (7)$$

Constants  $k_p$  and  $k_n$  are initially set at 2.5. If necessary, they are dynamically adjusted so that no current limitations are exceeded.

## III. SINGLE CONVERTER CASE STUDY

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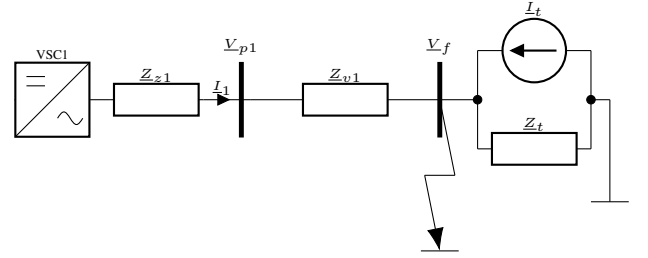


Fig. 3: Single-phase representation of the single converter system under study

## IV. TWO CONVERTER CASE STUDY

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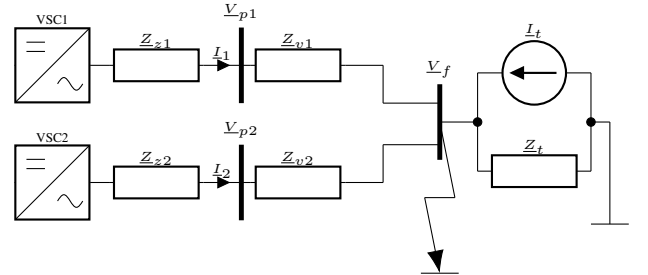


Fig. 4: Single-phase representation of the two-converter system under study

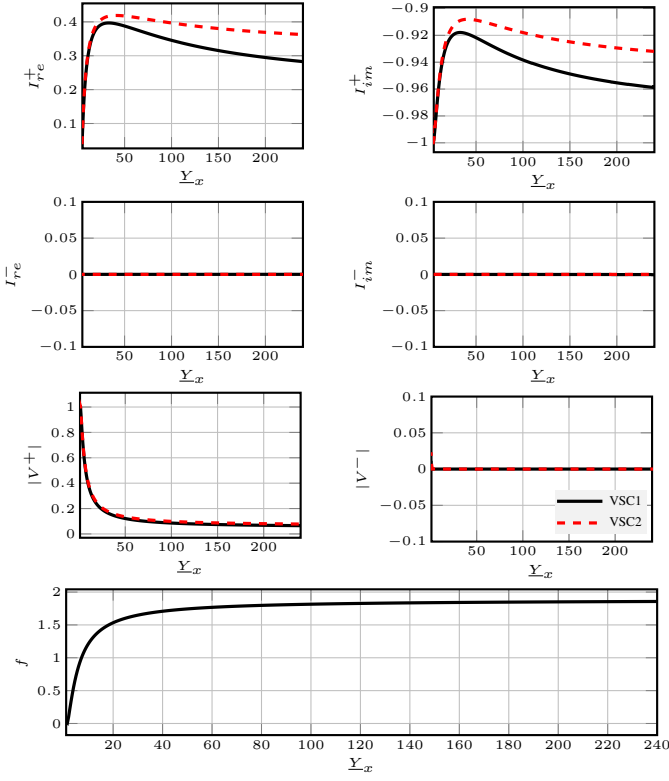


Fig. 5: Influence of the currents on the objective function for the balanced fault with a varying fault admittance

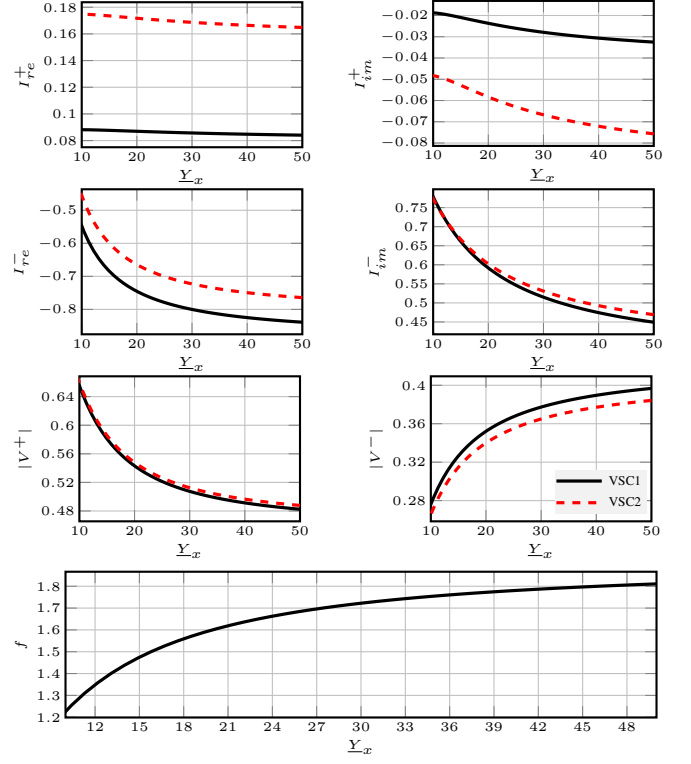


Fig. 7: Influence of the currents on the objective function for the line to line with a varying fault admittance

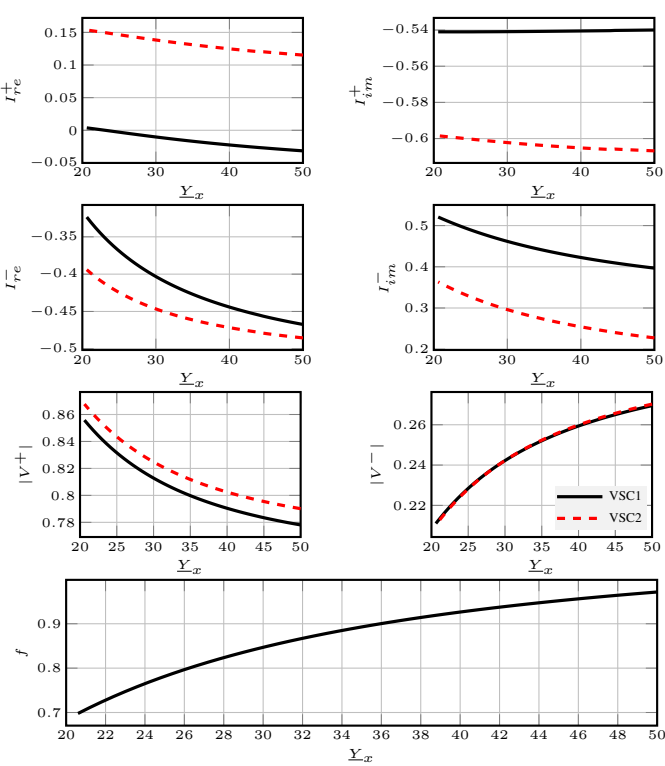


Fig. 6: Influence of the currents on the objective function for the line to ground with a varying fault admittance

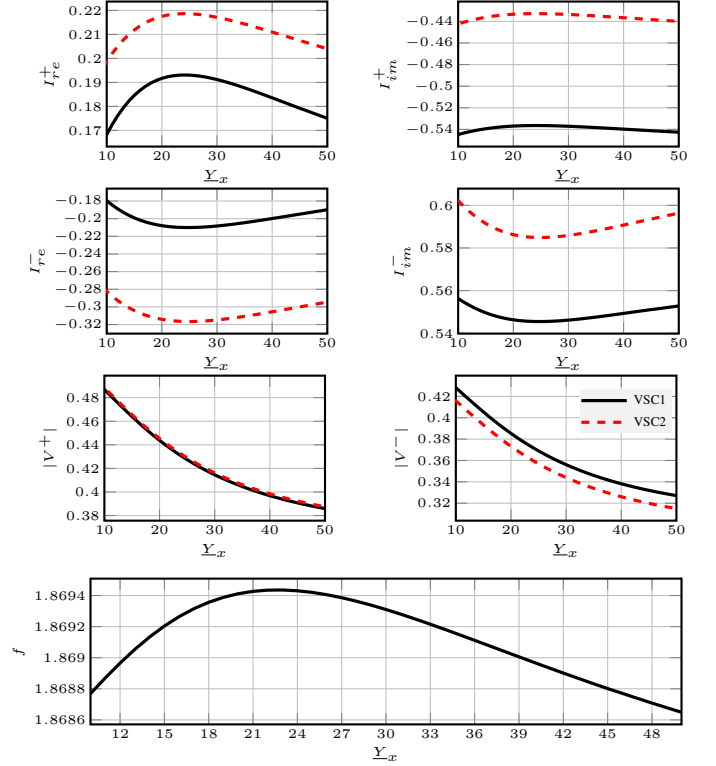


Fig. 8: Influence of the currents on the objective function for the double line to ground with a varying fault admittance

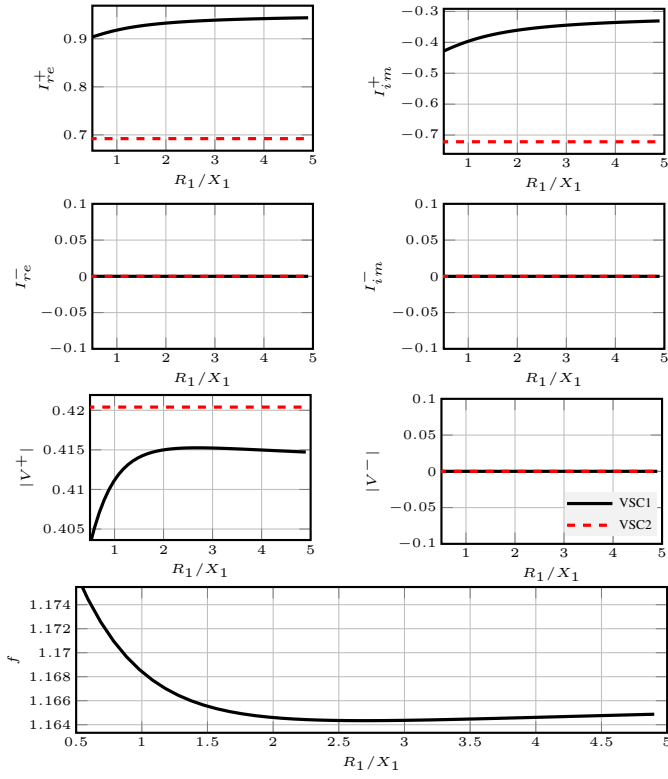


Fig. 9: Influence of the currents on the objective function for the balanced fault with a varying  $R_1/X_1$  ratio and  $\underline{Z}_x = 0.1$

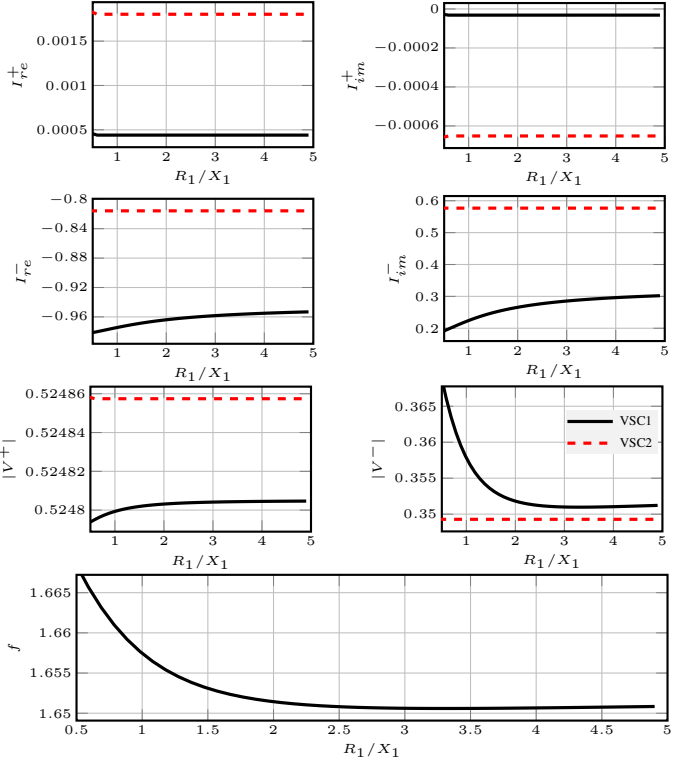


Fig. 11: Influence of the currents on the objective function for the line to line fault with a varying  $R_1/X_1$  ratio and  $\underline{Z}_{ab} = 0.04$

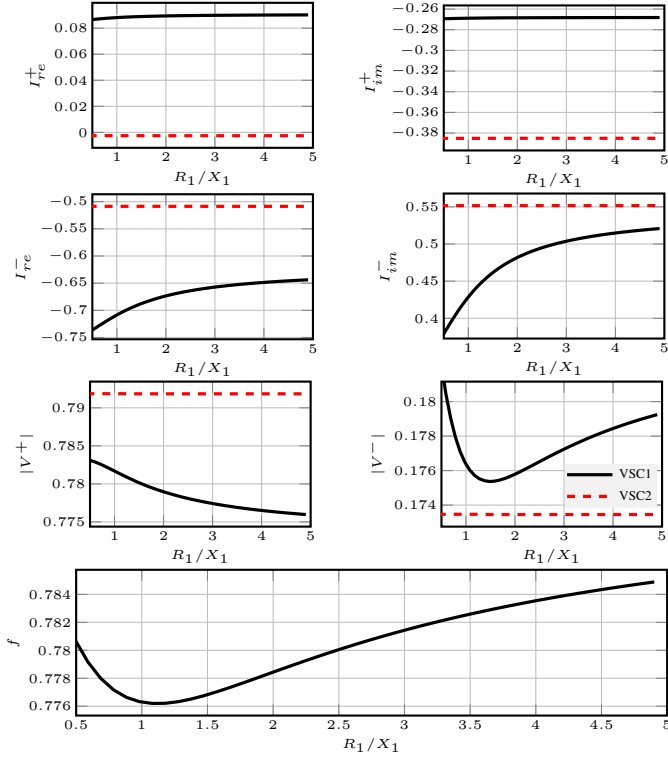


Fig. 10: Influence of the currents on the objective function for the line to ground fault with a varying  $R_1/X_1$  ratio and  $\underline{Z}_{ag} = 0.04$

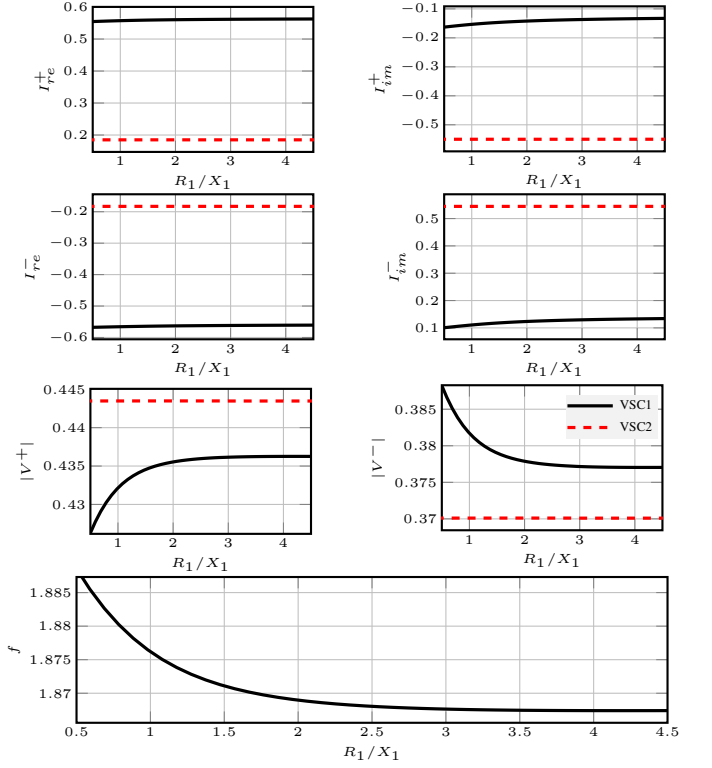


Fig. 12: Influence of the currents on the objective function for the double line to ground fault with a varying  $R_1/X_1$  ratio and  $\underline{Z}_{ag} = 0.04$

## V. CONCLUSION

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## ACKNOWLEDGMENT

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